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Letter dated 9 December 2005 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of my mission to Côte d'Ivoire, carried out from 18 to 21 October 2005.

I would appreciate it if the present letter, together with its enclosure, were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Adamantios Th. **Vassilakis**
Chairman
Security Council Committee established pursuant to
resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire

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Enclosure

Report of the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire on his mission to Côte d'Ivoire

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I. Introduction

1. On 7 September 2005, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire agreed that its Chairman would visit Côte d'Ivoire on the basis of a political framework to be decided by the Security Council.

2. On 21 September 2005, following informal consultations, the President of the Security Council issued a statement to the press in which the members of the Council expressed their support for my upcoming visit to the region. The Council noted that the purpose of the visit was to assess the progress made by all parties towards the implementation of their commitments, bearing in mind the Committee's mandate under paragraphs 9 and 11 of resolution 1572 (2004), so that the Council would be in a position to take appropriate action in response to those who posed a threat to the peace and national reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire or who were responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the country.

3. I visited Côte d'Ivoire from 18 to 21 October 2005, accompanied by Maria Telalian, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations, and Loraine Rickard-Martin, Secretary of the Committee. During our stay we visited Abidjan (two days) and Bouaké and Daoukro (one day).

4. At my request, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Pierre Schori, prepared a comprehensive and well-organized programme. I would like to express to him and his staff my deep appreciation for all the assistance provided and for making the practical arrangements for my travel.

5. I met with all the signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis, Accra III and Pretoria Agreements. I wish to emphasize that all my interlocutors received me in a very forthcoming manner and dedicated the necessary time for a constructive and meaningful discussion.

6. In particular, I met with the President of the Republic, Laurent Gbagbo, the Prime Minister, Seydou Diarra, and the representatives of the various political parties as follows:

- Front populaire ivorien: Pascal Affi N'Guessan
- Mouvement des forces de l'avenir: Innocent Kobena Anaky
- Mouvement pour la justice et la paix: Gaspard Deli
- Mouvement patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire: Guillaume Soro
- Mouvement patriotique ivorien du Grand Ouest: Felix Doh
- Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement démocratique africain: Henri Konan Bedié
- Parti ivoirien des travailleurs: Francis Wodie
- Rassemblement des républicains: Henriette Diabate
- Union pour la démocratie et pour la paix en Côte d'Ivoire: Mabri Toikeuse

7. I did not meet in person with Alassane Dramane Ouattara (Rassemblement des républicains), given that he resides in France. His representative, Henriette Diabate, who is also interim President of the Rassemblement des républicains, provided me with his telephone number, so we were able to speak extensively on the telephone immediately after I returned to New York. The meeting scheduled with Theodore Mel Eg of the Union démocratique et citoyenne did not take place for reasons beyond my control.

8. In Abidjan, I also met other State officials, in particular, the President of the National Assembly, Mamadou Koulibaly, and five vice-presidents; the President of the Economic and Social Council, Laurent Dona Fologo; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mamadou Bamba; the Minister of Defence, René Amani; and the Chief of Staff, General Philippe Mangou.

9. I also met with the newly established Independent Electoral Commission, representatives of four State press organizations and the representatives of four human rights organizations.

10. Finally, I felt it would be very useful to meet with the ambassadors of the members of the Security Council, the members of the Linas-Marcoussis monitoring committee and the ambassadors of all other countries represented in Abidjan.

II. Meetings with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and other United Nations bodies

11. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pierre Schori, and his senior staff gave me a broad and extensive briefing regarding their activities, cooperation between UNOCI and the Ivorian Government and developments regarding the current situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

12. As an example of the prevailing situation, it was noted that on 17 October 2005 there was an inaugural ceremony for the foundation of a memorial in honour of the late president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The event was attended by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and several members of the Government. As soon as the President of the Republic departed, a group of "Young Patriots" approached the ministers of the opposition in such a threatening way that UNOCI was obliged to place ministers under its protection.

13. We received a written update containing several proposals by UNOCI for improving the media situation, which included: (a) strengthening UNOCI outreach teams and its political analysis capacity; (b) ensuring that journalists from both State-owned and private media adopt ethical standards for accurate and balanced news coverage; and (c) expanding UNOCI FM radio to broaden the scope of its direct coverage of developments throughout the country.

14. According to a UNOCI written briefing, serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continue to occur in both the Government and the Forces nouvelles zones, as well as in the Zone of Confidence. Ivorians continue to be kidnapped, arrested or killed as a result of criminal and political violence. These serious violations of human rights were attributed to elements of the Government-controlled Defence and Security Forces, military elements of the Forces nouvelles and armed and unarmed militia associated with both sides of the Ivorian conflict.

The human rights cases mentioned included incitement to political violence, killings and denial of the right to education. It was noted that the Government had failed to conduct investigations that could have shed light on events that led to killings in various parts of the country.

15. UNOCI underlined that there had been cases of non-cooperation and denial of freedom of movement to its forces by the Ivorian authorities. It was noted that obstructions had decreased in October, which was attributed to anticipation of my visit. UNOCI conducts two types of investigations: random and with prior notice (on the basis of information provided by Licorne and the Joint Mission Analysis Centre). Cooperation from the Ivorian Government was generally good, and UNOCI believed it was doing the best monitoring it could with the resources available to it.

Meeting with Antonio Monteiro, High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire

16. Mr. Monteiro expressed the view that unless the Independent Electoral Commission was set up in an all-inclusive manner, elections would not be possible. I would like to express my gratitude to him for arranging the meeting with all members of the new Commission and for all his support.

Meeting with the impartial forces

17. I also met with the impartial forces and in particular with General Fall (Force Commander of UNOCI), General Irastorza (Force Licorne) and UNOCI Police Commissioner Bouchard. The point was made that the international community should be concerned about the large quantities of armaments with a highly destructive capacity already acquired by Côte d'Ivoire, a sizeable portion of which was located in and around Abidjan, posing a serious risk. Force Licorne members were experiencing impediments to their movement and were sometimes confronted with violence.

18. With regard to disarmament, it was noted that Forces nouvelles held that its members were eligible for Ivorian citizenship and would not relinquish their arms until they had received identity cards.

Meeting with the Linas-Marcoussis monitoring committee members: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Chair), France, the European Commission, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the United States of America, the International Organization of the Francophonie, the African Union, the World Bank, special advisers from UNOCI and Force Licorne

19. Some members of the monitoring committee emphasized the need to apply the sanctions quickly in order to speed up the electoral process, and particularly against those who were not implementing the Agreements. The Committee pointed out that as far as the threat of sanctions was concerned, there was a credibility problem, though the presence in Côte d'Ivoire of the Chairman of the sanctions committee would help in that regard. It was pointed out that sanctions would have an effect on the behaviour of the parties only to the extent that they were aware that sanctions were a real issue.

20. I was asked whether the Ivorian Government had contacted the sanctions committee concerning a request for an exemption to the arms embargo. I replied that I had been approached and had informed the Côte d'Ivoire representatives that it was the responsibility of the potential supplier of the equipment to apply to the committee for such an exemption, through the relevant Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

21. It was added that local and expatriate communities alike in Abidjan were fearful that there could be an explosion in the country after 30 October 2005. It was also noted that such a crisis could result in a massive refugee movement to countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), some of which were experiencing drought and famine.

Meeting with representatives of members of the Security Council

22. A majority of the representatives of the Security Council members stressed that sanctions must be implemented, particularly against those who violated human rights. The implementation of sanctions in relation to the road map was also emphasized. One ambassador noted that the Forces nouvelles were fighting essentially for identity, not political power. He pointed out that the denial of identity cards, which were needed for voting, was a means of political control, and stressed the need for confidence-building measures.

III. Meetings with the signatories of the Agreements

A. Message conveyed

23. During my meetings with the signatories of the Agreements and other State officials, as well as in my public statements, I delivered a message, which is summarized below.

24. The Security Council was following the developments in Côte d'Ivoire closely and expected the parties to respect and implement the Agreements. I added that the sanctions committee had not yet established a list of individuals and entities against which the travel ban and assets freeze would apply, because it had wanted to give the peace process a chance, while indicating its readiness to act when the time was ripe. I emphasized that this approach had been encouraged by the African Union and by its Mediator, Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, who had requested the Committee to hold off on implementing targeted sanctions.

25. However, given the failure to implement the Agreements, the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country and the inflammatory statements in the media, as indicated by various reports, the Committee, with encouragement from the African Union and the Mediator, had decided to reconsider the question of implementing targeted sanctions against those who constituted a threat and an impediment to the peace and national reconciliation processes.

26. I told the parties that I was visiting Côte d'Ivoire in order to assess the situation; that the Council had hoped that the parties would find their own way out of the crisis; and that no one wanted to impose sanctions for their own sake, but only as a means to move the country along the path to peace. I asked all sides to put aside the resentments of the past, to make additional efforts, and to "go the extra

mile", to bring Côte d'Ivoire out of the current stalemate and back to the brightness that it once enjoyed.

27. I drew the attention of the parties to the expiration of President Gbagbo's mandate on 30 October 2005, urging them to exercise self-restraint and to live up to their commitments under the relevant Agreements. In particular, I urged all Ivorian parties to fully implement the new resolution that the Security Council was about to adopt (resolution 1633 (2005) of 21 October).

28. Responding to questions from my interlocutors, I had the opportunity to explain the details of the targeted sanctions (an assets freeze and travel ban), including procedures for the listing and delisting of individuals designated by the Committee, according to the existing Committee guidelines. I made the point that no one was exempt from the sanctions regime.

B. Meetings with the signatories of the Agreements

Meeting with Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic

29. President Gbagbo stated that he had done everything that needed to be done to end the crisis in the country. In particular, he had taken all legislative and other measures required by the Agreements. Furthermore, in some cases he had amended the laws in order to satisfy the demands of the opposition (i.e. laws on the Independent Electoral Commission, citizenship, naturalization, the granting of amnesty, participation of the opposition in the Government). However, he said, new demands were being made constantly.

30. In his view, the main element lacking was disarmament, given that many who had no right to possess arms had refused to disarm. Each time the current Prime Minister had set a date for disarmament, the opposition had refused to comply. He believed that disarmament was the only reason elections had not been held and the main reason the country was in the current situation. He stressed that Forces nouvelles had to disarm immediately in order for elections to take place.

31. Responding to questions, the President stated that he was ready to implement the decision of the African Union and the resolution of the Security Council, adding that there was full freedom of movement in the governmental zone. Lastly, he noted that the "Young Patriots" and other armed youths were difficult to control.

Meeting with Seydou Diarra, Prime Minister of the Government of National Reconciliation

32. Prime Minister Diarra gave an account of the events since he was appointed Prime Minister and the problems he had faced prior to assuming his duties. He stated that although he had performed his duties in good faith, he had not been able to achieve results because he lacked the necessary financial authority. He said that he considered the appointment of a new Prime Minister a difficult task and noted that he was in favour of sanctions, because the country would move ahead only if pressure was exerted.

Meeting with Pascal Affi N'Guessan, President of the Front populaire ivoirien

33. Mr. Affi N'Guessan noted that he had agreed to leave the post of Prime Minister in order for the Agreements to be implemented, according to which disarmament would immediately follow the setting-up of the Government of National Reconciliation. However, he stated, the disarmament process had been suspended and the international community appeared to be unwilling to force the issue. Stressing the need for respect for the rule of law, he said he believed that the rebels were so confident that no one would or could disarm them by force that they saw no need for a democratic debate.

Meeting with Innocent Kobena Anaky, President of the Mouvement des forces de l'avenir

34. Mr. Anaky emphasized that many supporters of the President of the Republic, including militias and private people, in Abidjan and in the rural areas, carried weapons and must be disarmed in order for elections to be held. The destination of weapons was also a cause for concern, as many were not going to the army. He pointed to the events of 17 October after the memorial ceremony in honour of President Houphouët-Boigny, when he had been almost attacked by Young Patriots, as exemplifying a culture of violence against the opposition. Therefore, in his view, it was necessary for persons subject to targeted sanctions to be designated in order for them to realize that they would not enjoy impunity and that they were "in the eye of the cyclone".

Meeting with representatives of the Mouvement pour la justice et la paix, Gaspard Deli, Mouvement patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire, Guillaume Soro, and Mouvement patriotique ivorien du Grand Ouest, Felix Doh

35. The Secretary-General of the Forces nouvelles, Guillaume Soro, presented the background of the current crisis. He noted that although historically Côte d'Ivoire was a multicultural and multiracial melting pot, a number of people now found themselves considered foreigners on their own soil, without entitlement to Ivorian citizenship. He believed that the crisis was primarily one of identity. He raised the issue of the agreement signed by military leaders committing to the distribution of identity cards during the pre-regrouping phase and noted with regret that it had not been recognized by President Gbagbo.

36. He also expressed regret that his party had not been consulted or associated with the recent talks on Côte d'Ivoire held in Abuja (by ECOWAS) or Addis Ababa (the African Union). He also said that since the international community had awarded the position of President to the other side, it would only be fair for his party to acquire the position of Prime Minister.

37. He expressed the view that disarmament should start not with the surrender of weapons, but rather by "pre-regrouping", with an eventual movement to disarmament and demobilization. He indicated that the policy of "Ivoirité", as construed, would destroy the nation and added that he had signed the Agreements on the understanding that his members would be guaranteed citizenship, but equality among Ivorians still had not been achieved.

Meeting with Henri Konan Bedié, President of the Parti democratique de la Côte d'Ivoire

38. Mr. Bedié stated that implementation of the Agreements had been hampered by the existence of militias, death squads and human rights abuses that had served to block the electoral process. Stating that the opposition parties were unable to function because they were prevented from organizing demonstrations, he added that he believed that it was imperative to distinguish political parties from armed groups. In his view, a new Prime Minister was needed during the transition period and should remain until the end of the elections because the President would not have the necessary powers after 30 October 2005. He added that while it was necessary for the Government to organize elections, there were problems associated with drawing up the electoral lists because people still lacked identity cards, which was in fact the cause of the crisis. He stated that in order for those who had committed violations not to remain unpunished, his party wished to see the United Nations assume its responsibilities and impose sanctions, lest it lose credibility.

Meeting with Francis Wodie, President of the Parti ivoirien des travailleurs

39. Mr. Wodie said that disregard for the Agreements had caused a crisis of confidence, that there was a problem of bad faith and that armed attacks, if not outright war, would be possible after 30 October. Referring to the problem of the new Independent Electoral Commission, he was of the opinion that everyone should work for the independence and neutrality of the Commission in order for elections to be organized. His preference would be for Ivorians to take the situation in hand and implement measures without external pressure and sanctions. He believed, however, that sanctions could be a deterrent for those who continued to obstruct the peace process.

Meeting with Henriette Diabate, interim president of the Rassemblement des républicains

40. Mrs. Diabate described the situation in the country as very difficult, especially from the security point of view, as demonstrated by the fact that the President of the Rassemblement des républicains was forced to live abroad. She emphasized that the ministers of the opposition were not able to perform their duties, and gave as an example that as Minister of Justice she was unable to nominate judges without the approval of the President of the Republic.

41. She also stated that the representatives of the group of four political parties (the Mouvement des forces de l'avenir, the Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement démocratique africain, the Rassemblement des républicains and the Union pour la démocratie et pour la paix en Côte d'Ivoire) and the three Forces nouvelles movements (the Mouvement pour la justice et la paix, the Mouvement patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire and the Mouvement patriotique ivoirien du Grand Ouest) were all in agreement, and insisted that sanctions must be applied as soon as possible, since as long as nothing happened, people would continue to believe that nothing ever would. However, she said, it was necessary for assurances to be given that sanctions would be applied in the interest of the Ivorian people. She expressed concern that if the new Independent Electoral Commission did not live up to expectations regarding its autonomous nature, it would have great difficulty in fulfilling its tasks.

42. In a telephone conversation, Alassane Ouattara stated that he fully agreed with the views presented by the interim president of his party, Mrs. Diabate, and that he followed the developments in his country closely, but that owing to the lack of security and the threats against his life he was forced to live outside the country.

Meeting with Mabri Toikeuse, President of the Union pour la démocratie et pour la paix en Côte d'Ivoire

43. Mr. Toikeuse noted that the Secretary-General and the former president of his organization had been murdered and their offices devastated, and that some newspapers had also been destroyed. He stated that grave human rights violations were taking place, that in some cases militias were housed in schools and clinics and that some ministers had "more arms than the armed forces". Noting the problems experienced by the Independent Electoral Commission, he expressed the view that the United Nations was not taking sufficient responsibility and that if the sanctions were not applied, people would continue to believe that violence was the only way to resolve the conflict.

IV. Meetings with other State officials

Meeting with Mamadou Koulibaly, President of the National Assembly

44. Mr. Koulibaly emphasized that all the necessary laws had been passed by the National Assembly but that disarmament had not been implemented by the other side. He showed a keen interest in the sanctions regime and its implications.

45. I also met with five vice-presidents of the National Assembly, who expressed views according to their political affiliation, while leaving me with the impression that they appreciated the content of my message.

Meeting with Laurent Dona Fologo, President of the Economic and Social Council

46. Mr. Fologo noted that a mosaic of 60 ethnic groups made the nascent nation fragile and that the economic crisis, a rapidly increasing population, the impact of neighbouring countries and a certain "weakness in political analysis" had all contributed to the problem. However, he did not expect developments to lead to war.

47. Stating the view that the majority of those who were armed were from the "wasted" or "foiled" generation, he stressed that he stood for order and discipline and was working with those in power, who were former opponents. He added that he had taken a firm position against using weapons as a way to settle the country's problems. Emphasizing that the Agreements had not been implemented and must be respected, he expressed himself in favour of the sanctions as a useful tool to force people to behave in a more rational manner and to move towards peace.

Meeting with Mamadou Bamba, Minister for Foreign Affairs

48. Mr. Bamba expressed concern about the human rights and humanitarian situation, as well as about the impact of the crisis on the region, given that Côte d'Ivoire had been its economic pillar. Noting the importance of free and fair elections, he stated that sanctions should not only be threatened but actually applied.

and underlined the importance of implementing the decisions of the Security Council.

Meeting with René Amani, Minister of Defence

49. Mr. Amani attributed the current deadlock to insecurity and a lack of mutual confidence. He stressed that disarmament should be carried out without any prerequisites and highlighted the need to build confidence and to mobilize the necessary means for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Observing that the United Nations Development Programme had assessed that the crisis had cost the country 25 years of progress, the Minister expressed the hope that the elections would pull the country out of the crisis.

Meeting with General Philippe Mangou, Chief of Staff of the Forces armées nationales de la Côte d'Ivoire

50. I mentioned that, in its final report (S/2005/699), the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire noted that it had enjoyed good collaboration with the Ivorian armed forces and that they had not found any major violations of the arms embargo. At the same time, I emphasized the need for UNOCI not to be impeded in any way in the execution of its mandate, particularly in its freedom of movement and the need for the disarmament of the militias and the armed groups.

51. General Mangou stated that sustained efforts to move towards peace had been rebuffed, and that consequently discussions had been brought to a halt. Furthermore, he stated that there was a time frame for disarmament, but that whenever implementation was imminent, the opposition raised new problems. As regards the disarmament and reintegration of militias, he stated that a majority of militia members were civilian, not military personnel. He also noted that the rebellion had attracted many young people initially, but as the hardships had increased, many had left the fight and returned to the fields. He added that once they were ready to ask for forgiveness, they would be reintegrated. He also believed that sanctions must be applied for the country to move towards peace.

V. Meetings with State organizations

Meeting with the Independent Electoral Commission

52. Antonio Monteiro, High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, convened and chaired the meeting with all the members of the new Independent Electoral Commission.

53. Responding to my message, some participants stated that the main reason that the Agreements had not been implemented was that the signatories did not represent the Ivorian people. Others were interested in ascertaining the procedures to be followed for applying sanctions and for making an appeal against such a decision, as well as the duration of the measures. Still others expressed the view that targeted sanctions were not an effective tool because most of the potential targets had no money and did not travel abroad.

Meeting with press organizations

54. I met with representatives of four State press organizations: the Observatoire de la liberté de la presse, de l'ethique et de la déontologie de Côte d'Ivoire, the Conseil national de la communication audiovisuelle, the Comité national de la presse, and the Union nationale des journalistes.

55. The discussions focused on the monitoring of the media for hate speech, as well as on the imposition of sanctions. It was noted that there were restrictions on the freedom of movement of journalists, who were not allowed access to certain areas of the country, and that there were many newspapers, each supported by a political party.

56. Regarding the political situation, it was noted that elections could not be conducted without disarmament, but that the Forces nouvelles insisted that its constituents must have identity cards before they disarmed.

57. The Comité national de la presse stated that it had the authority to impose sanctions (fines, suspension and prosecution) as necessary, although its resources were limited. It was pointed out that sanctions had been recently used against both the French (Radio France internationale) and the Ivorian (Radio télévision ivoirienne) press.

58. The Observatoire de la liberté de la presse, de l'ethique et de la déontologie de Côte d'Ivoire noted that it had a website that publicly denounced abuses by the press and that it also acted as a mediator for individuals who believed they had been damaged by the press. The Union nationale des journalistes stated that it was in favour of individual sanctions.

VI. Meeting with civil society human rights organizations

59. I met with 22 representatives of human rights organizations, including 2 women's groups, at UNOCI headquarters. The participants expressed their views freely, irrespective of their political affiliation.

60. It was noted that among the political parties there was a lack of political will and that the war was used as an excuse for not implementing the Agreements. Although some were sceptical of the positive effects of sanctions, they believed that sanctions should be used nevertheless. Several people remarked that the current instability had led to serious violations of human rights, some mentioned that massacres were taking place. Regret was expressed that civil society had been excluded from discussions on the crisis and the peace process.

61. Representatives of two women's groups urged that Ivorian women be brought into the peace process, as they had been in Liberia and Rwanda, where they had played an important role in resolving the conflicts in those countries.

VII. Assessment, conclusion and recommendations

62. I believe that my visit was well timed and that the sanctions have proven to be an effective tool and deterrent to any further action that might hinder the peace process. There was some apprehension among the various actors as well as the

general population that my visit would lead to the application of targeted sanctions. They all had various questions regarding the sanctions regime and its impact on individuals. I gave the necessary explanations and emphasized that no one would be exempted from the sanctions regime.

63. From my meetings with Ivorians of various affiliations, I concluded that there was strong agreement that individual sanctions should be applied without further delay to force the parties to implement the Agreements and to prevent incitement to hatred or violence, human rights violations and abuses. However, each side believed that the other side deserved to be sanctioned.

64. There was scepticism among some regarding the positive effects of sanctions, in particular about their power to change the behaviour of targeted individuals. Consequently, some actors sought assurances, which I provided, that the sanctions would be applied in the interest of the Ivorian people.

65. It was noted that there were a significant number of daily newspapers in Côte d'Ivoire but that many were under the influence of the major political parties. The prevailing view was that the press was not reliable, and that it indeed fanned the flames of violence. Some made the point that there were journalists whose articles could be criticized as inciting hatred, violence or intolerance, in which case the question was whom to sanction: the journalist as author of the article, the publisher or the editor of the newspaper.

66. Disarmament was and will continue to loom large in everyone's mind as a goal, but under different criteria of implementation; therefore, the goal remains unattainable. The problem was often stated in terms of a lack of mutual confidence.

67. There was widespread belief that elections were the key to solving the crisis, and great disappointment was expressed that the original timetable had not been met. Almost everyone with whom I spoke voiced the hope that the elections would be held as soon as possible. Several interlocutors mentioned problems with funding and resources for the new Independent Electoral Commission. Concern was also expressed regarding the disruption by "Young Patriots" of the meeting of the Independent Electoral Commission.

68. The Panel of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire did not find major violations of the arms embargo. At the same time, there are serious indications that large quantities of arms are at the disposal of the population. Needless to say, the issue of disarming the militia and defence groups was accorded high priority.

69. Bearing in mind the above, in my view, the Security Council and the Committee should keep the situation under close review until Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) is fully and unconditionally implemented and the disarmament of the Forces nouvelles, the militias and the defence groups is completed.

70. In the meantime, the Committee should consider taking prompt action against any individuals responsible for hindering the peace process, violating the arms embargo, inciting hatred, violence or intolerance or committing violations or abuses of human rights or international humanitarian law. I believe that such action will support the peace process and help to restore confidence and trust among the Ivorian people.

71. I also believe that the time has come for the Security Council to consider the report submitted by the International Commission of Inquiry for Côte d'Ivoire in 2004 and for the Sanctions Committee to discuss the annexes as suggested by the Secretary-General, with a view to putting an end to impunity.

72. In conclusion, while the request of the African Union and the Mediator to withhold any action that would have a negative effect on the peace process has been justified and the threat of sanctions has had an impact, the Council should not leave unanswered any actions that may give the impression that it allows impunity, which would undermine its credibility.

73. Last but not least, I wish to reiterate my appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pierre Schori, and his staff, as well as to the troop-contributing countries for their steady dedication to United Nations peacekeeping operations.